

## Creative and Functional Education: The Challenges and Prospects in a Comatose Economy

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### Abstract

Creativity is a key driver in the global economy. However, in the majority of national curricula creativity is perceived as secondary in many subjects. Unfortunately this means that students leave school without knowing how to create and innovate, consequently they will be under prepared for challenges that our society and economies are facing. In today's world of global competition and complex problems, creative intelligence and innovative capacity are fast becoming requirements for personal and professional success. Creative intelligence and imagination exist in all children therefore it should be fostered. To cultivate and educate the right "right minds" we need educational curricula that include exploration, problem solving and diversity. It is important that school systems respond to the changing world. There is need for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and united nations. To this end school programs need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive for the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society, The paper is an analytical synthesis of the challenges and prospects of education in the global economic crisis and suggests creative and functional education as a panacea.

**Keywords:** Creative, functional, education, challenges, prospects, comatose, economy

### INTRODUCTION

The role of education as the foundation of social, economic, political, and cultural development is undisputed. All over the world education is expected to be highly rated in national development plans. School programs need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive while interest and ability should determine the individuals' direction in education for the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical, social abilities and competences as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the society (Udoh & Akpan, 2014). Teaching and learning for a new age require a new educational model of education. It means an interactive and creative education based on individual needs and abilities. Education throughout the world faces challenges, and they may be economic, technological, social, and personal. This requires a high degree of flexibility and adaptability of the educational system to these challenges. New approaches are needed to find a way to promote students motivation, self-esteem and the skills. A good educational system gives students the freedom to recognize their capabilities and individual potentials. Education should foster students to act creatively about ideas and issues across a range of disciplines. As creative thinkers they should explore alternatives. Such an approach is required for a solid academic foundation hence enhance their intelligence.

Creativity is the entire process by which ideas are generated, developed and transformed into values. It comprises what people commonly mean by innovation and entrepreneurship. Creativity is about liberating human energy. It is the process of developing ideas that are original and of value. Creative intelligence is dynamic diverse and distinct. It is been imaginative or inventive, taking risk or challenging convention It is about original thinking. Creativity is associated with the achievements. In recent years researchers and educational writers have extended the general meaning of creativity so that it incorporates ideas about inventiveness and imagination. This reflects a growing acceptance that creativity is not simply about coming up with big ideas but coming up with practical solutions to everyday problems and then applying them to real life solutions. Creative education is based on individual needs and abilities. It requires freedom of learning and teaching. An active mode of learning influences innovative personality development which creates something unique.

Functional education is a holistic and educational experience that is focused on the identification of situational problems, gathering of information to make decisions in a world of challenges and realities of life, enhancing users and end users to acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes to showcase new concepts as a vehicle of globalizing such countries or state for meaningful co-existence, sustainability and developments (Adewale, 2014). Functional education should be capable of producing Nigerians who can manufacture raw materials,

machines, and tools needed for local and international markets, invent new designs, discover drugs capable of curing diseases hitherto incurable and transform the nation from consumption to a manufacturing status (Udoh & Akpan, 2014).

### **The economy in a coma**

In spite of the good intentions contained in goals and policies, the economy is in a critical situation, with a combination of different factors such as depreciation of the naira, huge budgetary cuts, debt burden, high unemployment, investment contraction, banks speculation and lack of transparency. The economy is currently characterized by a modest inflation rate, high interest rate low capacity utilization and high unemployment. The economy needs expansionary policies to stimulate economic growth and generate new jobs. (Onyegu, Akinbode, Ugochukwu & Chukwuma, 2002). The economy is in shambles. We are indebted to the tune of \$ 60b. while the federal government borrow money to pay workers, most states and local governments are owing workers' salaries for months (Fwa, 2015). Inflation is at 16.48 percent and still rising, most Nigerians are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their basic needs, as the economy entered into full blown recession following two quarters of consistent negative growth. Nigeria is facing unprecedented and tremendous political and economic challenges with global and local dynamics. As Nigeria's economy is contrasting, domestic and global headwinds ensure that downside risk will escalate. Without aggressive economic moves and harsh security measures, the economy could face a disastrous free fall. Nigeria has so far achieved theoretical quantitative macroeconomic fundamentals, but a lot needs to be done particularly on stabilizing her bearish Naira currency. Although Naira is relatively stable it is weak when compared to major currencies like the Dollar and Euro. Presently Nigeria is having one of the lowest debts to GDP ratio in the world. This is attributed to her recent payment of foreign debt and the reasonably macro-economic stability she achieved through economic reform measures with a huge foreign reserve. Yet the value of the Naira continues to be depressed (Chiakwel, 2016). Regardless of these challenges, opportunities and possibilities abound. If we address some fundamental issues and have a developmental plan that is anchored on realizing inclusive and sustainable growth we will get out of the woods.

### **Impact of a comatose economy on education**

The financial melt-down has ushered in dramatic shift in the economic landscape, with direct implication on education at all levels. The crisis comes at a time of impressive progress in getting more children into school, with primary school enrolment across sub-Saharan Africa increasing at a much faster rate. This is especially true in the case of Nigeria which has made little progress to widen access to primary education. Low-income countries face the challenge of expanding access, building more classrooms, training and hiring more teachers and improving the quality of learning. The world's poorest children and youth are most at risk of dropping out of school because of poverty. Like much of the nations, our public schools are in dire financial trait nearly every state has less to spend on education. Already before this worldwide recession, the Nigerian educational system has been on the downward slope. A visit to any of our public schools at all levels will reveal a nation whose educational policy makers have perfected official deceit as an art. How could Nigeria possibly be among the world's twenty economies by 2020 with the state of our public education at all levels, vision 20:2020 amounts to a mirage (Bamigboye & Adeyemi, 2016).

The impact of the economic crisis on higher education in Nigeria will even be more profound. Already Federal educational institutions are facing continuous decrease in funding from the governments. The national politics determines the quality of education policies, programs and processes and eventually products. Government underfunding and commoditization of education is likely to worsen the crisis in education. The current economic crisis confronting many governments is creating severe conflicts in the educational sector of many nations. On one hand they have to reduce, their budget deficits to avoid excess indebtedness. On the other hand they have to promote education firstly to alleviate unemployment as a short run crisis measure and secondly to avoid the deterioration of human capital in the long run. High percentage of national budgets focus on the public funding which greatly affects the education sector. Some governments carried out overall budget cuts. These had negative effects on teachers, students and families (Bamigboye & Adeyemi, 2016).

The gross underfunding of the educational sector in the country in general and the neglect of the maintenance of the physical facilities, instructional and living conditions have deteriorated in many of the public schools. Classrooms, libraries and laboratories are nothing to write home about, all leading to decline in academic standards (Odia, & Omofonmwan, 2007). The ever-rising population and the economic crisis are the main cause of Nigeria's deplorable educational scenario, about 40 percent of the total population in the country is aged between 6 and 11, and do not attend primary school. More shocking about 4.7 million children who are of primary school age do not go to school. In an age where education is catered through technological advanced tools, Nigeria is still witnessing classes beneath trees with one teacher assigned to 100 pupils. To reveal a more dreadful estimate 10 million of the total Nigerian children are deprived of formal education.

Nigerian education has been experiencing a geometric setback since the past two decades. And its'

pathetic situation has always been a source of concern. Classes are always crowded with up to ninety students in a class designed for about thirty students. In most cases especially in public secondary schools chairs are not enough, students share seats and desks, some will and receive lectures. Nigerian schools at all levels are lacking the essential materials for learning, especially for science practical classes. This no doubt affects the learning process. Most secondary schools lack science materials, and those that claim to have are managing the old ones. Hence, the students only cram theoretical steps rather than carrying out practical.

Education for all and assurance of quality education should be the prime objectives of any government (Barnamala, 2015). Education is the basic human right that should be feasibly accorded to all human beings. It is the key index to economic and social development of a country (Ekanem, 2015). No nation can develop beyond its educational standard or level. Thus education is a catalyst for socio-economic and political development of a nation. The success of many nations in tackling major developmental problems such as poverty, unemployment, among others can be traced to their educational system. Today, we are facing major challenges in our global economy, in our environment and in social issues. The need for creativity in education has never been greater.

### **Prospects of education in Nigeria in a comatose economy**

Education is foremost a human basic need. Any country can reach the peak of development if it can educate its people. In the global knowledge economy education has a crucial role in nurturing human capital. Education has enormous potential to promote prosperity in the developing nations (Mobasser & Muhammed as cited in Barnamala, 2015). It ensures economic growth, leads to social transformation and finds solutions to national developmental challenges. Education endorses social mobility and a high standard of living (Chaudhary as cited in Barnamala, 2015). The development of a modern society depends to a large extent on the nature and standard of education. By educating an entire population, economic growth is a natural effect. A country Gross Domestic Product can increase by 1 percent annually by providing education to its entire population. Increasing a country GDP creates innumerable opportunities for trade and development. No country in the world has achieved rapid and consistent growth without at least 40 percent of its adult population being literate. Education can motivate people to become harder workers and can give people the drive to move up in the workforce. Increasing literacy rate in a country can drastically improve economic development. Education is the key to giving poor farmers the tools they need to increase their yields, maximize profits and limit waste.

Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches peoples understanding of themselves and the world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. In addition it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution. The economic growth of a country largely depends on technological improvement and on its scientific and technical manpower. Technological education therefore has a crucial role in speeding up a country's industrial development. It provides one of the most potent means for development of skilled manpower as required by various sectors in a country's economy. Technical and vocational education has been an integral part of national development strategy in many societies because of its impact on productivity and economic development. Vocational technical education gives individuals the skills to live, learn and work as productive citizens in a global society.

### **Conclusion**

Times of crisis call for making choices and setting priorities. The economic crisis has not swept the knowledge society on the contrary, early childhood education, girl's education, literacy and skills training for youth and adults are foundations for inclusive social and economic development. Technical and vocational skills must be developed. The Nigerian education system is facing monumental challenges, poor quality of schooling from elementary to tertiary level, arising from the issue of poor quality of teachers (especially at the basic level), characterized by weak school infrastructure, meager supplies and equipment. The crisis in the education sector is not only alarming. It is a disaster that will set back Nigeria's human and economic development for decades thus mortgaging the future of generations unborn if it is unchecked.

### **Recommendations**

1. Curriculum modifications must be enhanced with modern teaching instrumentation
2. Government, private, corporate organizations, non-governmental organizations and individuals should as a matter of due responsibility encourage and finance research programs, inventions and mass production of invented products
3. There should be a proper budgetary allocation for the educational sector. Funds should be channeled to each institution and proper managing of funds must be ensured by the government. The abysmal low level of allocation to the education sector must be reversed.

4. Curriculum load should be reviewed
5. Educational regulatory bodies should ensure that the syllabuses are strictly followed and well implemented
6. Government should tax the rich and wealthy corporations to fund public education. The huge profit locked in the vaults of multinational oil companies, telecommunication giants and industries if heavily taxed by government will go a long way to much of the needed resources to fund quality education
7. It is important to create skilled, well trained, motivated and ethical teachers who will help students to learn in a pragmatic way and prepare for the global employment market
8. Universities should launch programs that will enable aspiring teachers to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge
9. There should be economic diversification

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